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Dedicated to making Michigan a no more homeless pets state.

September 21, 2011

Dear Members of the Senate Regulatory Reform Committee:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today at this hearing on Senate Bill 574. I am Deborah Schutt, Chairperson of the Board of the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance, a not for profit statewide organization whose mission it is to end the killing of homeless healthy and treatable dogs and cats in Michigan shelters.

Every passing five minutes a homeless dog or cat is killed in Michigan's shelters --- 24/7 - 365 days a year. The Michigan Pet Fund has an eleven point strategy for Michigan to become a No Kill state. Puppy mill breeders, brokers and auction animals are a target in our strategy as they contribute to uneven supply for the demand of companion cats and dogs in Michigan. Often the connection is not made that these sources place an undue tax burden to operate municipal shelters which address the unwanted supply. Unconscionable individuals glean profits which are exacted from the health of innocent puppies and kittens which suffer for illnesses, diseases and congenital defects in addition to inhumane treatment and deplorable conditions of the parent dogs and cats.

Recent polls indicate that over 50% of households that have a dog consider the dog a member of the family. When the decision is made to bring a dog or cat into a household -- especially a kitten or puppy, they almost immediately melt the heart of their new guardian and often an instant bond is developed.

The Michigan Pet Fund supports Senate Bill 574 and urges your affirmative vote. Although this bill does not address the emotional trauma that new guardians often endure with the illness and death of their new family member, it is a step toward accountability and potentially better care and treatment of the animals, and consumer protection for the new guardian.

We would recommend the following enhancements to the bill:

1. Transparency and Disclosure -- We would request that
 - a. The seller is required to provide to the buyer breeder information -- name and address.
 - b. The seller is required to provide to the buyer the list of protections they are afforded by this act.
2. A provision addressing congenital defects. These types of defects which are disregarded by unscrupulous breeders often cannot be detected in young animals and are often the most costly and long term. We would recommend that one year be provided to report such problems.

Again we thank you for the opportunity to be heard and urge your passing of this bill with our suggested enhancements.

Deborah Schutt